

Larry King Interviews Frank Lindh, Shimon Perez CNN December 3, 2001 Monday



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Frank Lindh discusses his son, who is an American, fighting for the Taliban.

BODY:

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LARRY KING, HOST: Tonight, there's no keeping "CBS News" anchorman Dan Rather tied to a desk. He joins us live from Kabul. Then, how does a 20-year-old American, named John, end up fighting for the Taliban in Afghanistan? We'll have an exclusive one-on-one with his father, Frank Lindh.

Then, Israel strikes back after a bloody series of suicide bombings. We'll talk with Israel's foreign minister, Shimon Peres, as well as the P.L.O.'s chief representative in the United States, Hassan Abdel Rahman.

Plus, Sting with a very special musical performance. They're all next on LARRY KING LIVE.

Good evening, Dan Rather will be with us throughout the entire program tonight, as we break for other guests. We'll start first for a few moments with Dan in Kabul.

Why, Dan? Why are you there?

DAN RATHER, "CBS NEWS": Well, because there's a war on. Americans are involved in the war. It's one of the most important stories of our time. One of the, perhaps the most important story of the early part of the 21st century.

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I think it's important to walk the ground. It's very hard to be credible on something as important as war, and stay in a windowless room on the west side of Manhattan or somewhere in midtown. I couldn't be any other place, Larry.

KING: I thought anchors are supposed to anchor.

RATHER: Well, apparently some anchors think so. I understand that. But this is the era of the mobile anchor. I've always considered myself first and foremost a reporter. I came in to this wanting to be a reporter anchor, all caps reporter, small caps anchor. I have tried to do that over the last 20 years, plus I understand other people have other views. But this is the way I choose to do it.

I can't imagine being anything other than a go there, see it, hear it, feel it, think about it on the ground, kind of reporter/anchor.

KING: What's the biggest difference for you in the 20 years since you've been there?

RATHER: There's enormous difference, Larry. When the Afghans began resisting the Soviet invasion in the 1980s, they had a measure of unity because everybody, whatever their differences, they all agreed they had to repel the Soviets.

Now they are split asunder, and have been for a long while. Let's face it, they have been for some years now, under what amounts to a kind of fascist Islam. So, that's a tremendous difference. There's also much more suffering now. There was great suffering then. I thought at that time I had never never seen as much suffering among children and women. But there's even more now. The country is much more devastated because it went through 20 years of war.

Now, the other big difference is in the way the Afghans fight. The warlords, if we can call them that, and I think we should in some cases, they had a loose unity at the time they got together to fight the Soviets. Now there's an extreme question in my mind whether they have any unity at all.

Now, we with some of our money and a lot of our special forces help in the south around Kandahar, they're helping with the siege of Kandahar and have helped other places in the country. But we should have no illusions, the problem in this country is one of unity. The Afghans don't seem to understand, or if they understand, they are not able to do it, that if they don't have unity, then the surrounding nations, India, Pakistan, Iran and Russia, are always going to be trying to split them asunder and cut them apart. It's very, very sad.

KING: All right, Dan is standing by with us. We'll have him ask questions as well. But right now let's go to San Francisco. Frank Lindh is the father of John Philip Walker Lindh, the 20-year-old United States citizen turned Taliban fighter, taken in to military custody in Afghanistan. This is Frank's first live interview.

What is the story, Frank? What attracted your son to go over?

FRANK LINDH, SON BECAME TALIBAN FIGHTER: Larry, my son was a convert to Islam when he was 16, just in high school age here in California. He attended a Mosque in San Francisco, began to really study in earnest while he was there, and then he went overseas to study Arabic in Yemen, which is a good place to study Arabic because the old form of Arabic is spoken there.

He came back home after about a year in Yemen, then he went back to Yemen to continue his language and religious studies there in Yemen. Then in November of 2000, he went to Pakistan. He was there in a mosque in Pakistan in a city called Bannu from November until May, the first of May this year.

At that point, he had told us he was going to go up to the mountains of Pakistan and spend the summer because of the heat in Bannu during the summer. And with my blessing, he did leave. What we didn't know until Saturday night, was that John apparently went to Afghanistan rather than farther up to the hills of Pakistan.

KING: When, Frank, was the last time had you heard from him?

LINDH: At the first of May, Larry.

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KING: So it was not since May?

LINDH: Not since May. We have been waiting and hoping and praying to hear some word from him since the first of May. It was only Saturday night of this week that we, you know, we all viewed those images on CNN.

KING: Did anything in your mind lend you to think that he might be with them? Anything from a prior correspondence before May, any statements he had made to you that might lend to you think that he would join or be part of that group?

LINDH: No, Larry. John, he's a very sweet kid, very devout, very religious. He is certainly devoted to this religious conversion that he had to Islam. But to me, John was always the same kid. He always had the same sense of humor, the same family relations with his sister and his brother. And so I had no indication or reason to be concerned that he would put himself in danger like this by going to Afghanistan.

KING: What were you thoughts after September 11?

LINDH: Well, our thoughts were very troubled, Larry. We were very concerned because there had been this long period already where we had not heard from John, and now of course we have this, the terrible, terrible tragedy here in the United States. And demonstrations in Pakistan, where we thought John was, against the Americans, so we began to be even more concerned about the lack of any communication, thinking that John might be in some danger there in Pakistan.

KING: Now, Frank, what are you going through? You're obviously overjoyed that your son is alive, you haven't heard from him so you know he's alive. Yet you know, he might be charged with something, right?

LINDH: Well, I don't know, Larry. Our first concern is we want to see John. We want to see him. His mom and I both want to see him. We have hired a lawyer. We're very interested in getting information from the government as to where John is now. Let me say, though, we're also very grateful that the Special Forces picked him up. We know John is safe and we are very grateful for that information. But we do...

KING: But you had no idea what's going to happen to him?

LINDH: No, we have had no information or communication of any kind from the government as yet. We are, though, hoping, hoping to hear from the government.

KING: Have you tried to contact him?

LINDH: Well, no, Larry. I have no idea where he is. My information was that he was taken by the Special Forces. The one reporter on the ground in Afghanistan that I spoke to, the "Newsweek" reporter who broke the story, said he was speculating, but he thought John had been removed from Afghanistan to another country.

KING: What, as you look back and think back, he was raised Catholic, was he not, Frank?

LINDH: Yes.

KING: What took him to this extreme route? We understand being attracted to another faith and many do go to Islam and other type faiths as they move through life. But why this far, do you think?

LINDH: Larry, I really can't answer that without speculating. Until John disappeared on us, so to speak, on the first of May, I had nothing to see there other than a kid who, a boy really, who had converted to a religion that I respect and that seemed very healthy and good for him.

He was very devoted to it, devoted to the intellectual study and the study of Arabic, the memorization of the Koran, even by Islamic standards I think John is an outstanding student, a really devoted student, who ultimately wanted to attend the University at Medina, in Saudi Arabia. And I supported that, I thought that was a noble thing, and I was proud of John for pursuing that alternative course. Different, certainly, from where I grew up.

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KING: Boy, now, when the Cole was bombed, is it true you that you expressed displeasure with that and he did not?

LINDH: Yes, Larry. We did have a difference of political views on that issue. John, I was upset and I was concerned about the fact that these young Americans who were killed on the Cole were the same age as John. And we just had a little father/son debate, much like my dad and I used to have over Vietnam war, frankly. We had a father/son disagreement on that issue.

KING: Are there other children, Frank?

LINDH: Yes, we have three children. John is the middle child.

KING: What do the other two do?

LINDH: I have a son here in San Francisco, who is 23 years old. He works in a record store. And our daughter Naomi is a 7th grader.

KING: And your wife is at home, or does she work too?

LINDH: She works part-time, and we're actually, at Larry, in the midst of an amicable divorce, so we're separated.

KING: How are the two siblings handling this?

LINDH: Well, I have to say, I'm doing my best to remain composed, but we're all very, very upset with what John went through in this prison. It really defies description. And to think that our son, he's really not much more than a boy, that he went through this horrible experience in the prison and who knows what leading up to that, as parents and as family, we're very troubled and very concerned for his welfare.

And that's why we're -- go ahead.

KING: I'm sorry.

LINDH: I was going to say, that's why we're so anxious to see him as soon as possible. We want to give him a big hug and make a little kick in the butt for not telling me what he was up to, and for not getting my permission, because I would not have given him permission to go to Afghanistan.

KING: All right, what do you, what are your expectations the government is going to do?

LINDH: I don't know, Larry. I spoke with an attorney today. I have hired the attorney to represent John. I hope the government recognizes that John does deserve to have representation. But John is a good boy. I don't know of any information, any suggestion of any information indicating that he's done anything wrong. Therefore, I hope that John can be debriefed by the government and then come on home.

KING: There's no indication, thus far, that he was doing anything militarily with the Taliban.

LINDH: Larry, I know only what I have seen on CNN and on, on-line. It does indicate in those reports, this is hard for me to reconcile with the John that I know, but he was carrying an AK-47, according to one story.

So he appears to have been a combatant with the Taliban.

KING: Frank, before you leave us, Dan Rather is in Kabul. Dan, do you have a question for Frank?

RATHER: I do, Larry. I've been listening very carefully. Let me first of all say, that any father can certainly relate to what Frank is feeling. But Frank, you said your son had done nothing wrong. He's been quoted as saying that he supported and supports the attacks of September 11. Whether there's anything legally wrong with that or not, there are going to be many, many Americans, I have to say candidly this one, who would say that for whatever reason he said that, that that was wrong. I would like to get your reaction to that.

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LINDH: Dan, I'm very troubled by that statement as well. I would just ask you to consider the fact that he was being pressed by a reporter after being pulled out of the basement of a prison where he went through that horrible ordeal.

All I can say is that I don't think his mind was working, I don't think he was thinking straight at that moment. I don't think anybody could be thinking straight after that kind of an ordeal.

KING: Sad stories of war. You just ask what, Frank?

LINDH: Ask that people have a little mercy, and think about what he went through before he made that statement.

KING: Thank you, Frank.

LINDH: Thank you.

RATHER: Frank, I think you know that Americans are filled with mercy, thanks.

LINDH: Thank you, Dan, very much.

KING: We'll be right back with Dan Rather from Kabul on this edition of LARRY KING LIVE. Don't go away.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JOHN WALKER, TALIBAN FIGHTER: I was a student in Pakistan, studying Islam and I came in to contact with many people who were connected with the Taliban. I lived in the region, in the northwest frontier province. The people there in general have a great love for the Taliban. So I started to read some of the literature of the scholars and of the history of the movement and just thought, my heart became attached to them.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KING: We are back with Dan Rather in Kabul, Afghanistan.

Any idea, Dan, how long you're going to stay?

RATHER: No, Larry. It's day by day. But I'm going to be here for a while. I tell you, Larry, the whole trip has been worth it to me to talk to these really outstanding American young people who are in the service here.

I've been at this big old Russian air base outside, Bagram Air Base, outside of Kabul for the last couple days talking to our young men and women in the 10th Mountain Division, U.S. Army soldiers. And the whole trip over here has been worth it to talk to them, get a sense of what they think their mission is, how they're going to carry it out, how they feel about it. I really don't know how long I want to stay, but I'm here for a while.

KING: They are saying this is the first war ever where the servicemen worry about the people back home. And today, as you probably know, Governor Ridge issued another alert, to be on the alert for possible threats here. What are your thoughts on these continuing alert statements?

RATHER: Well, I take them at face value, Larry. It's very hard for me to conceive how any American would think otherwise. Yes, it's frustrating to have alerts sounded and then have nothing happen. On the other hand, that's a blessing. I think Americans understand, this is a war. This is a real war. There's nothing phony about this war. There is nothing peripheral about this war, that we have it all on the table in this war.

We found that out on September 11. And let me mention, Larry, that I haven't been surprised, but it's been satisfying to get the sense, I have yet to speak to a young American soldier or anybody in our service who doesn't know why they are here. They have September 11 right up here, all the time. A lot of them have it on their sleeve, all of them have it in their heart. And they know why they're here. And I think

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they would agree when you say look, we're in danger over here and they are in great danger, no one should misread the rather promising headlines about this war and say well, it's nearly over, and our troops are -- they're in some danger but not much. None of that is true.

But also we Americans are in danger at home. We Americans are in danger at home. We are in danger of something akin to September 11 happening again. We pray it doesn't happen. But we have to be ready and we have to steel ourselves. It's time for us to toughen up. I think we are in the procell of doing that. It is going to be a long war. Patience and understanding is required.

KING: Last time you were us with, you told us how much you admired the people of Afghanistan, the kind of people they were, how friendly they were. Have they changed and what is their mood now?

RATHER: Well, they have not, at base, changed, Larry, and it is true, I'm a great admirer of the Afghan people as a whole. They have characteristics which are compatible with the characteristics of Americans. I'm speaking now of the rank and file, the average Afghan.

First, they are a very brave people, as they indicated over the last 20 years. They live by a code of hospitality, honor and revenge. That last one sometimes gets them in a lot of trouble and leads to a lot of suffering on their part. But they are, they're capable on a very personal level, I was in the home of an Afghan family yesterday, the children especially, love America. They know things about Americans that I don't even know myself, things about movies and music and that sort of thing.

The question is the question that has plagued them for so many years, and that is can they get any semblance of unity to hold themselves together, to keep them from being continually just ripped apart by other world powers?

KING: Apparently they got some sort of an agreement today in Germany. A U.N. spokesman has told agents France, agence France, that the Afghans agreed on an interim government plan. How do you react?

RATHER: Very skeptically, to be perfectly honest with you, Larry. I'm hopeful that that can hold together. But everything we know about Afghan history, particularly the recent history, tells us how hard that's going to be. The deal, thus far, has been put together under immense pressure from the United States among others, but particularly the United States.

Because these factions were arguing among one another, it was bordering on chaos, maybe even anarchy. However, the public face was put on it. Now, the tentative arrangement is, they appoint an interim cabinet, so to speak, of 20-some odd members. That interim cabinet is to come in to Afghanistan, take over what there is of the government now, being run by the so-called Northern Alliance, and that that interim government would take over and prepare the way for Democratic elections next spring.

But let me say, Larry, on the basis of today's reports and these up to the minute reports, and what I know about Afghanistan, that deal is going to be extremely hard to hold together. I don't say it can't be, but I will say it's going to be extremely difficult to hold it together. All you have to do is walk the streets of Kabul, and talk to people through interpreters and otherwise know how difficult that deal is going to be to hold in.

KING: We have an enormous humanitarian problem coming. There are stories that tens of thousands could die this winter.

RATHER: No question about it, Larry. Those stories are true. I mentioned it earlier in the program, and I mention it again to underscore it. What's happened to, particularly the children and the women of this country, but to the population as a whole really, is unimaginable to most Americans. They have been at war 20 years. These last four, five years have been particularly difficult on civilians caught in the middle.

Winter is coming on. The humanitarian aid effort, which everybody, including those in Washington keep talking about, has yet to materialize. The 10th Mountain Division is trying to hurry up with this big airbase outside of Kabul to help build a sort of ground zero pipeline for the relief effort. But it's a race against time, and I will say on the streets of Kabul and out in the country side, where we have been quite a

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bit these last few days, Afghans, while prizing the United States for helping come in and rid Afghanistan of the Taliban, are asking a lot of questions about why is the humanitarian aid so slow in coming?

They don't say it in an arrogant way, they don't say it in any sense of, well, we deserve it, it's just they're begging, and that is very hard for Afghans to do, to beg. But they are begging and they know this winter is going to be tough unless that humanitarian pipeline gets open and gets opened in a hurry.

KING: Eight reporters have been killed. Does that give you some pause?

RATHER: Sure. I wouldn't be honest if I didn't say of course it gives me pause and to be candid, you think about it a lot. And I have those journalists very much in mind. There's some indications, no proof, some indications, Larry, that at least one journalist who was killed in Jalalabad was killed by the Taliban, not for money, not for his equipment, but as an act of just terror against that journalist.

But you know, if you're going to be a reporter and not just play one on TV, then you have to take risks. And particularly when American young people are putting their lives on the line, as members of our service, then I can say perhaps if one of those few times an anchor would say the story is not about me, it's not about my worries about danger.

There is some danger here, I do think about it, you just put -- get through it, because the story is worth it.

KING: We'll be right back with more of Dan Rather, one of the great journalists. Later, Shimon Peres will join us. Also Mr. Rahman returns, as a spokesman for the P.L.O. We are going to close the show with a musical performance by Sting. By the way, Don Rumsfeld, the secretary of defense will be our special guest on Wednesday night in Washington.

We'll be right back with Dan after this.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

RATHER (voice-over): We met Mohammed Hassan on this mine-working crew. He has survived 23 straight years of war, and wants to make his homeland safe.

(on camera): Does he think he can stay alive now with this mine-clearing work?

(voice-over): It depends on God, Mohammed tells me. If he wants to us die, we die. And many have.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KING: In a little while we'll be talking with Shimon Peres, the foreign minister of Israel. We'll get Dan's thoughts on that as well, of course.

Dan rather is with us from Kabul, Afghanistan. Have you run in to any Russians?

RATHER: Yes, Larry, I'm glad you mention it. I think the Russians involvement in what's going on in Afghanistan now is a vastly underreported story. No. 1, the Russians had a full division, I think it was called the 201st, at least an armored division right on the border of Afghanistan, and units of that division and other Russian troops have been very much involved in what's been happening lately, but they have kept themselves as much as possible out of sight.

There are reports, I have not been able to confirm them, but there are reports that I do believe that what amounts to Russian special forces are, have been operating for some time now even south of Kabul in the effort to make Kandahar fall. And the Russians rushed in here with a humanitarian aid operation.

They beat the Americans in here and nearly everybody else with humanitarian aid setup. In fact just across this wall from where I'm talking, the Russians have their version of a tent city, and have started their humanitarian aid operation. This is an official Russian government operation as I understand it. So they're very much involved here. What they are doing, Larry, is the Russians are dealing themselves a hand and they want to deal themselves a very big hand in what happens in Afghanistan next.

By the way, they have already opened their embassy where our State Department is saying, well, we may have the embassy open in two weeks to a month or something like that. Now, I think part of what

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the United States State Department is doing is sending a signal to the Afghans, look, we're not trying to impose our will on you. And of course, there's a lot of animosity in this country with the Russians because of what happened during the 1980s.

KING: And are the Russians trying to change that? Is this a different kind of Russia in there than was there years ago?

RATHER: Yes, this is a smiling bear. That's the reason they are placing, their whole emphasis is on humanitarian aid. They are keeping --their military operations have been almost virtually secret. I did see a sign yesterday, in fact, I saw three signs yesterday, Larry, in and around Kabul, scribbled signs, sort of graffiti, that said polar bear, go home.

The inference could not be any clearer, that this Afghans who wrote that want the Russians to go back up north. But the Russians are dealing themselves a very big hand here, they, along with the Iranians, Pakistanis, Indians, they're all going to be involved in the future of Afghanistan and that's one of the things that worries the Afghans the most just now.

KING: How, Dan, has the news about Israel the past 24, 36, 48 hours been received where you are?

RATHER: There's so much focus on the war, and what's happening in this country, Larry, that there hasn't been much attention on what's happened in the Middle East, in Afghanistan at large.

Remember, there's no television worth of the name here, no television news. Very little radio news of any kind, other than what comes in from the outside. Newspapers are virtually non-existent. So Afghans in general don't know what has happened in the Middle East. Among academics and others who, in the general populous, who listen to things like BBC radio and the Voice of America, they're aware of it.

But it remains, for them, very far away. They don't talk about it much, they don't think about it much. A few Afghans mentioned to me, sort of saying along the lines of, well, these Arab fighters who are putting up such a fierce defense of Kandahar, and caused so much trouble in Afghanistan, many of them come from that region over there, over there meaning, Palestine, Egypt, Yemen, Saudi Arabia.

But Afghans, they're a very insular people, they don't know much about the outside world. Very few of them know what's happened in the Middle East, and even fewer of them know how it will effect them, if at all.

KING: Is there a lot of talk about bin Laden? And have you run into people who might be looking for that bounty?

RATHER: There are a lot of folks looking for that bounty. The kind of money, the last time I checked it was something like \$25 million and headed upward, there are a lot of people interested in it, but not many people are talking realistically about being able to find bin Laden.

I have talked to a number of high ranking members of the Northern Alliance government here including the foreign minister, and they are absolutely convinced that Osama bin Laden is still in the country. Most of them believe that he is probably in the mountains west of Kandahar, and if, Larry, if you wanted to keep ahead of the news, I think you might look to those mountains west of Kandahar as the next big focal point in the war.

So that's where they think he is, somewhere there. Clearly, the United States government believes that he may still be in one of those caves in and around Jalalabad, which is in the eastern part of the country, as you know over near Pakistan. That's one reason U.S. bombing has been particularly heavy there, in addition to in Kandahar, because they just continue to think Osama bin Laden might be there.

Now what the United States has been doing in the last 48 to 72 hours is organizing some allied Afghan peoples, if you will, some local Afghans who are willing to do it, to go into some of those areas, the Tora Bora cave, for example, and see if they can find Osama bin Laden. Some of the locals around Jalalabad believe he is there.

In 1980, Larry, when I was here in Afghanistan covering the war against the Soviets, I was in some of those caves with the mujahedeen, the then anti-Soviet fighters. And I can tell you that some of those

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caves run back for many, many miles. It's a version of Carlsbad Caverns, if you will. And if Osama bin Laden is in such a cave, it'll be very, very difficult to find him and extremely difficult to root him out, even with the technology that we have.

KING: How much moving around are you doing?

RATHER: Well, as much as I can, Larry. That in and around Kabul, we're able to move, you know, fairly freely. We always have to keep in mind the safety factor. You know, I've often said I was raised by people who taught me to fear only two things, God and hurricanes.

But I have to add to that, for whatever reason, I know from my past war experience, that one needs to be particularly afraid in this kind of situation of mines, snipers and booby traps. Now we have to add to that, no sense of overemphasizing, but in terms of traveling around, that some journalists have been victimized.

But we've traveled around quite a little bit. I've tried to concentrate on talking to our troops. I have been able to talk to the 10th mountain soldiers, tried very hard to get with the U.S. Marines. And well, that's another story for another day. Wasn't able to do it. But we can move around. In Kabul itself, no difficulty. In the countryside at large, you always have to factor in the risk factor.

KING: We'll get a break and come back. We'll talk with Shimon Peres. We'll get Dan's reaction to that. Talk with the top P.L.O. representative, get Dan's reaction to that, too. You're watching LARRY KING LIVE. We'll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KING: We're back. Dan Rather remains with us from Kabul.

This just in. After more than five hours of closed door talks, the Israeli cabinet early Tuesday called the Palestinian Authority a terrorist supporting entity. Israel took aim at P.L.O. targets earlier today, following a deadly series of attacks. In that regard, we spoke earlier with Shimon Peres, shortly after those attacks. He is Israel's foreign minister. This was before the news about the cabinet. So my first question this morning was, is P.L.O. chief Yasser Arafat now considered an enemy by Israel?

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

SHIMON PERES, ISRAELI FOREIGN MINISTER: The difference can be done by Arafat himself. He has a problem, which is not necessarily limited to his relations with Israel. He has to decide how the Palestinian camps, each of them armed with rifles, or are they one camp and one address?

What's happening right now is that they have four different organizations, each of them shooting in a different direction. And the problem will affect the future of the Palestinians. They cannot go on like it. He has to decide not if he's a partner or an enemy, but if he's a leader or not. Because if he will be a leader just of a small fraction of the Palestinian life, he will hardly be able to manage his affairs.

KING: And how then, will you know what he decides to do? Must he state to it you? What must he do to satisfy Israel?

PERES: To outlaw the other three organizations that have arms and bombs and use them. Then to arrest the troublemakers of the Palestinians, and to arrest them seriously, and try to prevent further acts of violence and terror. Because we are a little bit uneasy, shall I say, disquieted, because we have still a list of warnings that some more acts of terror may take place in the future. If he wants to be a partner and a leader, he has to take the necessary steps, clear and right away.

KING: Do the people of Israel support the actions of the prime minister earlier today?

PERES: I would think so. You know, we were careful not to kill people, but to hit material. Metals and cement, there are no casualties. And in many ways, this is more of a warning than a military operation. It's a warning to Arafat telling him, take the situation in your own hands and respond to the real problems.

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KING: The prime minister said today that Mr. Arafat is responsible for everything that is happening. Do you share that view?

PERES: In a way, yes. He's the chairman of the Palestinian Authority, so he carries responsibility for whatever is taking place in the land which is under his jurisdiction. And we expect him to be responsible also for the security of the people who are there and to the people who are becoming the victims of some of these terrorists against infiltrating into Israel.

KING: Mr. Foreign minister, according to the Israeli press "Ha'aretz Daily," Palestinian officials made a phone call to you and asked for a four-day grace period, asking you not to retaliate for four days while they can take action. Is that true? And if true, why didn't you agree to that?

PERES: Well, they asked for 76 hours. It's not just a matter of four days, it's a little bit less. They have had already quite a few days, two days and more. And what happened today should not stop them from continuing to do what they started to do. Because as I have said, no casualties was caused to the Palestinians.

The warning was needed. And they should continue for their own good and for their own destinies to put things in order. They cannot let the different groups run wild in the territories and out of them. They don't serve Israel. They serve themselves by putting order in their areas.

KING: One of the problems, as the world looks at it, Mr. Foreign minister, is Israel retaliates, then they retaliate. Then you retaliate. Then they retaliate. And so the moderates on both sides have no voice. How do you respond?

PERES: The response is very simple, Israel never initiates, always reacts. It's not a matter of retaliation. They have nothing to retaliate against. The minute they will stop to initiate terror, Israel will gladly become an unemployed country. We shall not go to retaliate. It doesn't give us any pleasure. It doesn't solve any of our aims or inclinations.

KING: You don't agree then with the P.L.O. representatives who say that Mr. Sharon is silencing the voices of moderation by these actions, that he is encouraging those who are on the far edges?

PERES: I think Mr. Sharon has declared publicly that he wants to bring peace. And he has to be true to his promise. And I think that Mr. Sharon, like all of us, are in a serious search to see where can we reconcile? Where can we bring peace?

We are not the enemies of the Palestinians. We have nothing against them. On the contrary, we'd like to see them in an independent state, a state of their own, flourishing economically and being a good neighbor. Nothing can be better for Israel than to have a good neighbor and live in peace with us. We don't want to rule them. And we don't want to control them.

KING: Are there more attacks on your part coming?

PERES: Well, you know, those are the sorts of question that nobody can answer.

KING: Do you fear more retaliation from the other side?

PERES: We have warnings. We are trying to prevent further actions. And if we will do it, I don't see many reasons why we should continue with counteractions. But I pray to the Lord that terror will really stop for the benefit of our two peoples.

KING: Were you consulted before Israel took that action today? Or did Sharon do that independent of the cabinet?

PERES: No, there was a meeting of what we call the kitchenette. This is a reduced cabinet in size. And the proposals were brought before that cabinet.

KING: And therefore, we can assume that you agreed with them?

PERES: You can assume whatever you want. Usually we don't tell how the votings are taking place in the cabinet.

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KING: But certainly once it's decided...

PERES: But...

KING: ...you are defending it?

PERES: Yes, right. Once it's decided, I carry a collective responsibility with my other colleagues.

KING: Does the United States, Mr. foreign minister, have a role now?

PERES: Very much so, because one of the two and three most important ways to bring an end to terror is to tell Mr. Arafat and the Palestinians that the United States and Europe can no longer support the way he acts or avoid acting against terror. He is looking for international intimacy. And American position is of the highest importance to them.

So the position taken by the president of the United States, which was clear-cut and the Secretary of State, is really trying to have a certain impact upon the Palestinian position.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

KING: When we come back, we'll get some thoughts of Dan Rather and of Hassan Abdel Rahman, the P.L.O.'s chief representative in the United States. Don't go away.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KING: We are pressed for time here. So before we get some final thoughts from Dan Rather, we have with us in Washington, Hassan Abdel Rahman. He's the P.L.O.'s chief representative in the United States. What are your thoughts on what the foreign minister just said?

HASSAN ABDEL RAHMAN, P.L.O. CHIEF REPRESENTATIVE: I'm really troubled by what I heard from Mr. Shimon Peres, because I had expected him to not endorse the policies of Mr. Sharon. We know where Mr. Sharon stands, but Mr. Shimon Peres, we thought he held different positions.

First of all, Mr. Peres made the false statement that the problem we have with Israel is only over the last two weeks. He did not say that our problem with Israel is over the 35 years of military occupation forced on the Palestinian people by Israel, denied the Palestinians, I mean, denied their very basic human and political rights and robbed of their dignity, freedom, right of self-determination and their livelihood through the process of building Jewish settlement in Palestinian territories.

This is really the original sin. This is the cause of all the troubles. Definitely Yasser Arafat has been trying to bring under control the violence. But in order to achieve that, he needs two things.

One is logistics. How can Yasser Arafat move his forces, his security forces, as if every single city and town in the West Bank is encircled by Israel? How can Yasser Arafat muster in a political support when his people are starving? 50 percent are unemployed, due to the collective punishment imposed by the government of Mr. Sharon on the Palestinian people. When 28 Jewish settlements were built in the last nine months alone. So I mean...

KING: I don't mean to cut you, but we have a time problem here. I only got a couple minutes left. And we will certainly do a lot more on this and have you back, because we got a little thrown in time here tonight. You certainly agree that the acts the other day were wrong?

RAHMAN: Oh, absolutely. I agree we condemn them. And Yasser Arafat took the unprecedented steps of declaring emergency state in the territories, arrested 200 people, but what was the response? Attacks today by F-16 Apache helicopters against civilian population, against cities. Gaza is a city where one million people live.

KING: And you are now called a terrorist supporting entity by the cabinet?

RAHMAN: Yes, and that is, I assure you, not encouraging to the Palestinian Authority. And this is a position that's going to be very difficult to defend within the Palestinian community.

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KING: Mr. Rahman, we will have you back. I'm sorry, we got so limited on time, but we will definitely have you back. It's always good having you with us.

RAHMAN: Thank you.

KING: Because we want to spend this last minute and a half with Dan Rather in Kabul. Dan, you've been covering this for a long, long time, what we just talked about. What's your thought on all of it?

RATHER: Well, the focus now has to be on Saudi Arabia. The United States has to have more help from Saudi Arabia to get, have any chance of a reduction in the violence. I think many Americans don't understand the strong role the Saudis have played in all of this. They have to play a stronger role now. That's where the emphasis will go.

Behind that, Iran and Iraq remain enormous problems, in terms of trying to scale down the violence in that part of the world. It's a very difficult time to have much optimism about this, Larry.

KING: Dan, where you off to today? We have 30 seconds.

RATHER: Well, I want to go back out and talk to my new friends among the 10th Army Mountain Division. Still trying to get with the Marines down south. Watching the siege of Kandahar very closely. Kandahar and this airport could fall at any moment. But we know that the out of country Arab fighters who are in there are the key to that. And they vowed to fight to the death. I take them at their word.

KING: Dan, always good having you with us. God speed, be well, we'll keep in constant touch and we'll watch you all the time.

RATHER: Thank you, Larry.

KING: Dan Rather in Kabul, Afghanistan.

We're going to close it out tonight with a live performance right here in our studios by one of the great artists in the world, the incredible Sting is next. Don't go away.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KING: We welcome to LARRY KING LIVE, great pleasure to have him back, the singer, songwriter, musician, the world famous Sting has gathered us here in our Los Angeles studios. Thanks so much. You were in Tuscany on September 11?

STING, SINGER: I was. I was actually making a live album in my backyard. And I had 300 guests from all over the world. And about an hour before we were to go on, we heard the news. And it wasn't an easy gig. It wasn't the gig we prepared, but we had to alter the performance. And so the album really is dedicated respectfully to those who lost their lives.

KING: This is the new album "All This Time."

STING: Called "All This Time."

KING: Now you -- this song you're going to sing tonight, "Fragile," was the one song you did record that day, right?

STING: It's true. It was a big Web cast. And I agreed. I didn't want to sing at all, frankly. And so, I agreed to sing the song because I thought the sentiment was the right one for the day. And I asked for a minute's silence at the end of that performance. And then we shut down the web cast as a token of respect.

KING: Was it not difficult to work at all that day?

STING: I didn't want to sing, but I put a democratic vote to the band. And they said we have to. This is what musicians do, we play. Besides, you have all of these guests who clearly need some kind of help, some kind of human interaction, some kind of therapy. And music can help. So it was them that convinced me that I should do it.

KING: Were appearances canceled after that?

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STING: I canceled about three shows after that and my birthday party. But there was no way out of this one. So I went ahead and did it.

KING: And are you making appearances now?

STING: Oh, yes.

KING: Are you back on?

STING: Yes, we're back on schedule. I mean, I'm still flying planes and going around the world.

KING: Do you talk about this though in appearances? Do you deal with September 11?

STING: Yes, I think I'm forced to, really. I think we all are. I think it's going to be interesting how it alters the creative process. And I'm not sure how it will alter, but I think it will.

KING: Here is the great Sting -- there's no other word that applies to him -- and "Fragile."

(MUSIC, STING, "FRAGILE")

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KING: Tomorrow night, we're in Washington with Sebastian Younger, the author of "The Perfect Storm," just back from Afghanistan. The Duchess of York, she and her charity took quite a hit. Their offices were in the World Trade Center.

Right now, it's time for NEWSNIGHT and Aaron Brown in New York. TO ORDER A VIDEO OF THIS TRANSCRIPT, PLEASE CALL 800-CNN-NEWS OR USE OUR SECURE ONLINE ORDER FORM LOCATED AT www.fdch.com

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